

# Support Funding for 9-1-1

February 23, 2006

To: The United States Senate  
The United States House of Representatives

Re: An Open Letter to Congress

Dear Senators and Representatives:

We as a nation have come to rely on the ability to call 9-1-1 for all emergencies. As the primary link to our nation's first responders, 9-1-1 provides millions of Americans a lifeline to emergency response personnel. Congress recognized this in 1999 by making 9-1-1 the universal number for emergency calling in the United States.

One of the most important components and priorities of a national plan to promote homeland security, public safety and improved response to the American public is the ability of a robust nationwide Enhanced 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) system to locate all callers. New technologies and communications capabilities have provided an improved link to emergency personnel in locations where such help would have been impossible to deliver a decade ago. An estimated 200 million 9-1-1 calls are made each year to save a life, report an emergency or to tip off authorities of a potential incident. Yet, our nation's 9-1-1 system is far too often behind the many technological advances of recent decades.

While most areas in the United States have basic 9-1-1 service, there are still many communities operating without it. Over 225 counties still do not have E9-1-1 (routing of the call to the appropriate Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) based on the caller's location, automatic location information, and a callback number) for their landline telephone service. Additionally, only fifty-seven percent of PSAPs, covering just over two-thirds of the population in the United States, have the necessary technology to locate wireless 9-1-1 callers. As new technologies continue to develop, such as voice over IP (VoIP), more challenges for the 9-1-1 system emerge. A primary reason for these limitations is due to a lack of funding for 9-1-1.

Congress recognized the needs of today's 9-1-1 system by passing the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004. Sponsored by the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus and signed into law by President Bush on December 23, 2004, the ENHANCE 911 Act authorizes the creation of a national 9-1-1 program office and up to \$250 million per year for grants to upgrade enhanced emergency communications services. Yet, to date no monies have been appropriated to fund the provisions in the ENHANCE 911 Act. It is essential that Congress recognize the critical role that 9-1-1 plays in all emergencies and as a vital homeland security asset by providing funding for the ENHANCE 911 Act.

Our goal must be to equip the nation's 9-1-1 network and call centers with the best technology available, enabling them to provide the service that citizens have come to expect when they dial 9-1-1. Providing funding for the ENHANCE 911 Act is a critical step needed to meet this goal. We ask Congress to give us the opportunity to improve our nation's 9-1-1 system by funding this vital legislation today.

Sincerely,

David F. Jones, ENP  
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National Emergency Number Association

Wanda McCarley  
President  
Association of Public-Safety  
Communications Officials International

Steve Marzolf  
President  
National Association of 9-1-1  
Administrators

Jim Hunt  
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National League of Cities

Beverly O'Neill  
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U.S. Conference of Mayors

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National Association of Counties

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International Association of Chiefs of Police

Chief Harold L. Hurtt  
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Major Cities Chiefs Association

Sheriff Ted Sexton  
President  
National Sheriffs Association

Sheriff James Karnes  
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Major County Sheriffs Association

Sheriff Kevin Beary  
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Chief William Killen  
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